

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7340

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY KABUL

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AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL LAHORE

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AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 10173

MOSCOW FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJ: PAKISTAN'S NEW CABINET

REF: ISLAMABAD 9985, KARACHI 2113

SUMMARY: THE REVAMPING OF PAKISTAN'S CABINET ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 22 REPRESENTS THE FIRST WHOLESALE CHANGE IN THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT SINCE IT TOOK POWER ALMOST THREE YEARS AGO. BHUTTO HIMSELF REMAINS UNDISPUTED MASTER IN HIS OWN HOUSE, BUT THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE DIRECTION OF GOP POLICY PARTICULARLY IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD, A GENERALLY MORE EFFECTIVE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION, AND A SHIFT OF THE POWER BALANCES BOTH AT THE CENTER AND AT THE STATE LEVELS. THE OUSTER OF DOCTRINNAIRE SOCIALIST MUBASHIR HASAN FROM HIS KEY ECONOMIC PORTFOLIOS, ALMOST CERTAINLY
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THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SINGLE CHANGE ANNOUNCED, IS A FURTHER

STEP ON THE PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER TOWARDS A GREATER ACCEPTANCE OF THE ROLE OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AS A POSITIVE FORCE IN PAK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE RETENTION OF THE TALENTED RAFI RAZA AS PRODUCTION MINISTER AND THE INSTALLATION IN OTHER ECONOMIC MINISTRIES OF TWO NEWCOMERS WITH BUSINESS EXPERIENCE IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THIS SHIFT.

THESE CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC MINISTRIES DO NOT SIGNIFY THE ROUT OF THE SO-CALLED SCIENTIFIC SOCIALIST ELEMENT FROM THE MINISTRY AND TWO LEFTIST IDEOLOGUES SHAIKH MUHAMMAD RASHID AND KHURSHID HASAN MEER STAY ON AND HAVE BEEN GIVEN PORTFOLIOS WITH POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS. THE APPOINTMENT OF MALIK MERAJ KHALID AS MINISTER OF LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS REPRESENTS TO SOME EXTENT A REINFORCEMENT OF LEFTIST RANKS. THE CABINET CHANGES THEMSELVES SIGNAL NO CHANGE IN PAKISTAN'S APPROACH TO FOREIGN AND SECURITY AFFAIRS. THIS AREA REMAINS THE PROVINCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF WHO RETAINS BOTH THE FOREIGN AND DEFENSE PORTFOLIOS. END SUMMARY.

1. LONG HERALDED, NOT LEAST BY THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF, THE REVAMPING OF PAKISTAN'S CABINET ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 22 REPRESENTS THE FIRST WHOLESALE CHANGE IN THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT SINCE IT TOOK POWER ALMOST THREE YEARS AGO. ALTHOUGH ALL BUT TWO MEMBERS OF THE PREVIOUS MINISTRY CONTINUE IN OFFICE, THE MAJOR INFUSION OF NEW BLOOD (4 NEW MINISTERS, 9 MINISTERS OF STATE), RESHUFFLE OF PORTFOLIOS AMONG THE HOLDOVERS, AND THE FACT THAT ONE OF THOSE DROPPED WAS THE POWERFUL MINISTER OF FINANCE, PLANNING, AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, WILL MEAN THAT ALTHOUGH BHUTTO HIMSELF REMAINS UNDISPUTED MASTER IN HIS OWN HOUSE THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE DIRECTION OF GOP POLICY, PARTICULARLY IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD, A GENERALLY MORE EFFECTIVE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION, AND A SHIFTING OF POWER BALANCES BOTH AT THE CENTER AND AT THE STATE LEVEL.

2. ALMOST CERTAINLY THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SINGLE CHANGE WAS THE DISMISSAL OF MUBASHIR HASAN FROM HIS KEY ECONOMIC PORTFOLIOS. THE OUSTER OF HASAN, WHOSE DOCTRINNAIRE SOCIALIST POLICIES HAD BADLY DAMAGED PAKISTAN'S ECONOMY AND ALIENATED THE DOMESTIC BUSINESS COMMUNITY, IS A FURTHER STEP ON THE

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PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER TOWARD A GREATER ACCEPTANCE OF THE ROLE OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AS A POSITIVE FORCE IN PAK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO BUSINESSMEN THE DAY FOLLOWING THE CABINET ANNOUNCEMENT--CERTAINLY THE MOST ENCOURAGING WORD HE HAS GIVEN THEM SINCE HE TOOK OFFICE ON AN AVOWEDLY SOCIALIST PLATFORM IN 1971--SEEMS FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF MORE PRAGMATIC AND, FROM THE US POINT OF VIEW, MORE PROMISING POLICIES IN THE INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL FIELDS.

(KARACHI 2113 AND A SEPARATE EMBASSY MESSAGE PROVIDE A FULLER DISCUSSION OF THIS SIGNIFICANT ADDRESS.)

3. HASAN'S REPLACEMENT, RANA MOHAMMAD HANIF, WAS MINISTER OF LABOR AND WORKS IN THE PREVIOUS CABINET. A CAUTIOUS, COLORLESS ADMINISTRATOR, HE WAS KNOWN AS A LOYAL BHUTTO WORKHORSE ABLE SKILLFULLY TO PILOT GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION THROUGH PARLIAMENT. TRAINED AS AN ADVOCATE, HANIF HAS NO EXPERIENCE IN FINANCE OR ECONOMICS. CURRENT EXPECTATIONS ARE THAT HE WILL FAITHFULLY REFLECT BHUTTO'S POLICY INTERESTS AND PRIORITIES WHILE RELYING HEAVILY ON ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNICAL EXPERTS, MANY OF WHOM COULD NOT CO-EXIST WITH THE ARROGANT HASAN. HE IS EXPECTED TO BE WEAK, HOWEVER, IN DEFENDING HIS MINISTRY'S POSITION IN INTERMINISTERIAL NEGOTIATIONS. BUT FREE AS HE IS OF THE HEAVY LOAD OF IDEOLOGICAL BAGGAGE WHICH DISTINGUISHED HASAN, HE CAN ONLY BE AN IMPROVEMENT OVER HIS PREDECESSOR.

4. MORE POSITIVE COMMENTS CAN BE MADE ABOUT SEVERAL OTHER OF THE ECONOMIC MINISTERS. THE TALENTED RAFI RAXA, A CONFIDANT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S WHO REPLACED THE OUSTED LEFT-LEANING J. A. RAHIM AS MINISTER OF PRODUCTION IN JULY, RETAINS HIS PORTFOLIO. HIS ONLY SERIOUS SHORTCOMING IN HIS HANDLING OF THAT POSITIONS STEMS, IRONICALLY ENOUGH, FROM HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH BHUTTO, WHO CONTINUES TO USE HIM FOR A VARIETY OF TASKS UNRELATED TO HIS MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

5. THE NEW MINISTER OF COMMERCE, THE NEWCOMER MEER AFZAL KHAN, WILL BE A VALUABLE, SENSIBLE ADDITION. A RICH LANDOWNER AND INDUSTRIALIST FROM THE FRONTIER, HE IS HIGHLY REGARDED BY BHUTTO. HE SHOULD PROVE A COMPETENT ADMINISTRATOR, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF HIS EXPERIENCE IN BUSINESS, AND WILL NOT HESITATE TO SPEAK HIS MIND, WHICH IS A REMARKABLY CONFIDENTIAL

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KEEN ONE, TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS COLLEAGUES. WE KNOW LESS ABOUT YUSUF KHATTAK, THE NEW MINISTER FOR FUEL, POWER, AND NATURAL RESOURCES. A WEALTHY, LONDON-TRAINED FACTORY OWNER, HE IS UNTRIED IN GOVERNMENT OFFICE. ALONG WITH THE HOLDOVER MINISTER FOR INTERIOR, STATES, AND FRONTIER REGIONS, THE SEEMINGLY INDESTRUCTIBLE KHAN ABDUL QAIYUM KHAN, HE REPRESENTS THE QAIYUM MUSLIM LEAGUE IN THE ELEVEN-MAN CABINET PROPER DOMINATED BY BHUTTO'S PPP.

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6. THE DEPARTURE OF HASAN AND THE INSTALLATION OF NEWCOMERS AFZAL AND KHATTAK DOES NOT SIGNIFY THE ROUT OF THE SO-CALLED SCIENTIFIC SOCIALIST ELEMENT FROM THE BHUTTO MINISTRY. TWO LEFTIST IDEOLOGUES HAVE BEEN HELD OVER AND GIVEN PORTFOLIOS WITH POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS. SHAIKH MOHAMMAD RASHID WAS DEPRIVED OF HIS HEALTH POST (WHERE HIS GENERIC-NAME SCHEME FOR DRUGS AROUSED GREAT CONTROVERSY) BUT INHERITED THE VACANT FOOD AND AGRICULTURE PORTFOLIO AND CONTINUED IN HIS FAVORITE FIELDS OF COOPERATIVES AND LAND REFORMS. A PEASANT RADICAL BY CONVICTION AND BACKGROUND, RASHID IS CONSIDERED AN INEPT ADMINISTRATOR BUT WILL HAVE TWO STRONG MEN BACKING HIM UP IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE, MALIK KHUDA BAKHAH BUCHA, WHO CARRIES ON (WITH MINISTERIAL RANK) AS SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRIME MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, AND FOOD AND AGRICULTURE SECRETARY MOHAMMAD YAKUB. RASHID CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THE GOP'S
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LAND REFORM PROGRAM, WHICH HAS BEEN A MODERATE ONE.

7. THE CABINET'S OTHER WELL-KNOWN LEFTIST, KHURSHID HASAN MEER, HAD BEEN MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO AS WELL AS DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE PPP. HE HAS NOW BEEN AWARDED THE MINISTRIES OF LABOR, HEALTH, SOCIAL WELFARE AND POPULATION PLANNING, AND WILL APPARENTLY CONTINUE IN HIS PARTY POSITION. IS IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT MEER IS INTERESTED IN THE STATUS HIS NEW MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES GIVEN HIM RATHER THAN IN THE AUTHORITY THEY PROVIDE HIMFOR MAKING POLICY IN THESE NEW FIELDS. HE IS EXPECTED TO DECLAIM RADICAL SOLUTIONS FOR PROBLEMS IN THESE AREAS WHILE LEAVING THE ACTUAL OPERATION OF THE MINISTRIES TO THE BUREAUCRATS. THE MEDICAL PROFESSION, WHILE APPARENTLY PLEASED WITH RASHID'S DEPARTURE, SEEMS TO VIEW WITH SKEPTICISM MEER'S INTEREST IN OR APTITUDE FOR THE SCIENCE-RELATED SUBJECTS INCLUDED AMONG HIS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES.

8. THE APPOINTMENT OF MALIK MERAJ KHALID, FORMER CHIEF MINISTER OF THE PUNJAB AND PRESENTLY HEAD OF THE PROVINCE'S PPP UNIT, AS MINISTER OF LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, REPRESENTS TO SOME EXTENT A REINFORCEMENT OF LEFTIST RANKS. HE HAS A BACKGROUND IN PEASANT SOCIAL WELFARE WORK AND, BASICALLY DISTRUSTFUL ON THE WEST, HAS LONG BEEN A CHAMPION OF THE PRC IN THIRD WORLD FORUMS.

9. NOR SHOULD MABASHIR HASAN BE CONSIDERED COMPLETELY DEAD POLITICALLY. IN HIS SPEECH TO THE KARACHI BUSINESS COMMUNITY MENTIONED ABOVE, BHUTTO WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO PAY HIGH TRIBUTE TO HIS EX-FINANCE MINISTER WHO, HE SAID, HAD BEEN RELIEVED AT HIS OWN REQUEST "FOR PRESSING DOMESTIC AND OTHER REASONS." WHILE THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRAISE CERTAINLY REPRESENTED IN IMPORTANT MEASURE AN EFFORT ON HIS PART TO REASSURE PPP LEFTISTS CONCERNED ABOUT THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE HASAN DISMISSAL, IT HAS HEIGHTENED THE ALREADY CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION THAT THE FORMER MINISTER WILL BE GIVEN ANOTHER POST, VERY POSSIBLY THE VACANT PPP GENERAL SECRETARY POSITION FORMERLY HELD BY J. A. RAHIM.

10. WHATEVER ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL POLICY, THE CABINET CHANGES THEMSELVES SIGNAL NO

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CHANGE IN PAKISTAN'S APPROACH TO FOREIGN AND SECURITY AFFAIRS. THIS AREA REMAINS THE PROVINCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF, AND BHUTTO HAS RETAINED BOTH THE FOREIGN AND DEFENSE PORTFOLIOS. HIS DECISION TO DO SO HAS DOUBTLESS COME AS A DISAPPOINTMENT TO AZIZ AHMED, WHO HAS REPORTEDLY ARGUED THAT HE NEEDED FULL MINISTERIAL RANK TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH HIS PROTOCOL CONSCIOUS FOREIGN AND UNIFORMED MILITARY COUNTERPARTS. AHMED CARRIES ON AS MINISTER OF STATE, THE MOST SENIOR OF

ELEVEN HOLDING THIS SECOND-RANK TITLE.

11. THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE NEW APPOINTMENTS IN MAKING POSSIBLE MORE MEANINGFUL MINISTERIAL DIRECTION OF GOP DEPARTMENTS IS BEST ILLUSTRATED BY THE CHANGES IN THE PORTFOLIOS HELD BY ABDUL HAFIZ PIRZADA. A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, PIRZADA HAD HAD AN UNWIELDY COLLECTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES (LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, EDUCATION, AND PROVINCIAL COORDINATION) TO WHICH BHUTTO FREQUENTLY ADDED RELATED SPECIAL PROJECTS. HE IS NOW ENTRUSTED WITH A MORE MANAGEABLE ENSEMBLE, KEEPING EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL COORDINATION BUT TRADING LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

12. IF THE REALIGNMENT OF PIRZADA'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN NO WAY REFLECTS ANY DOMINISING OF THE REGARD IN WHICH HE IS HELD BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE SAME IS NOT TRUE IN THE CASE OF MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI. THE MAULANA, WHO CONTINUES AS THE GOP'S PRINCIPAL LINK TO THE CONSERVATIVE MUSLIM POLITICO-RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY, HAS LOST THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND HAS NOT REALLY BEEN COMPENSATED BY BEING MADE HEAD OF THE NEWLY-CONSTITUTED MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS. (HE HAD EARLIER BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS AND HAJ, TWO SUBJECTS WHICH WILL MAKE UP THE PRINCIPAL FAR OF THE NEW MINISTRY.) THE INFORMATION MINISTRY HAS BEEN ABOLISHED AS A SEPARATE PORTFOLIO AND CONVERTED INTO A DIVISION IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT. THE CHANGE IS LIKELY TO STRENGTHEN THE ALREADY POWERFUL HAND OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR INFORMATION, THE TRUSTED YUSUF BUCH. DISSATISFACTION WITH NIAZI, WHO USED THE PORTFOLIO TO ARGUE HIS OWN RIGHTEST IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS AND PURSUE HIS PRIVATE POLITICAL VENDETTAS, WAS PROBABLY AMONG THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH PROMPTED THE CHANGE.

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13. THE CABINET APPOINTMENTS WILL AFFECT THE POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS IN THE PROVINCES, ESPECIALLY IN THE TWO LARGEST. IN FACTION-TORN PUNJAB, MOST IMPORTANT IS THE IMPACT ON THE FORTUNES OF TWO FORMER CHIEF MINISTERS, GHULAM MUSTAFA KHAR AND MERAJ KHALID. WHATEVER KHAR'S OWN (UNREALISTIC) EXPECTATIONS MAY HAVE BEEN, HE AND HIS FOLLOWERS REMAIN OUT OF POWER AT THE NATIONAL AS WELL AS THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL. NO PUNJAB FACTION EMERGED CLEARLY ON TOP, HOWEVER, AND THE LOW- AND MEDIUM-LEVEL MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS SUGGEST A BALANCING OF POWER AMONG CONTENDING LOOSELY-ALIGNED GROUPS. THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF MUBASHIR HASAN COMPLICATES ANY FINAL ANALYSIS. IN SIND, THE APPOINTMENT OF MUMTAZ ALI BHUTTO AS MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND SOME OF HIS FOLLOWERS TO LESSER MINISTERIAL POSITIONS WOULD APPEAR TO STRENGTHEN MUMTAZ'S

HAND IN HIS COMPETITION WITH HIS SUCCESSOR AS CHIEF MINISTER, G.M. JATOI. THE END-RESULT, HOWEVER, MAY BE TO REMOVE THE IRRITANT THE MUMTAZ FACTION REPRESENTED FROM THE KARACHI SCENE AND ENHANCE UNITY IN THE SIND BRANCH OF THE PPP.

14. AGE, BACKGROUND, AND ORIGIN. THE EXPANDED BHUTTO MINISTRY--INCLUDING HERE MINISTERS, MINISTERS OF STATE, AND THE EIGHT PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES WHOSE APPOINTMENT WAS ANNOUNCED EARLIER IN THE MONTH (ISLAMABAD A-168)--IS A RELATIVELY YOUNG GROUP. TWENTY OF THIRTY-ONE ARE UNDER FIFTY, ELEVEN OF THEM IN THEIR THIRTIES. MANY (NINE) WERE EDUCATED ABROAD, MOSTLY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. BY TRAINING MORE THAN HALF ARE LAWYERS; TWO ARE RETIRED MILITARY. FOR A SO-CALLED PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT THEY ARE REMARKABLY AFFLUENT--ABOUT HALF HAVE A ZAMINDAR (WELL-TO-DO LANDOWNER BACKGROUND) AND THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN. ALL PROVINCES ARE REPRESENTED, WITH SIND (8) AND NWPF (6) SOMEWHAT OVER-REPRESENTED AND THE PUNJAB (WITH 13) GIVEN FEWER SEATS THAN ITS SIZE AND POLITICAL IMPORTANCE WOULD SEEM TO WARRANT. THERE IS ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM BALUCHISTAN. BYROADE

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